# The Mysteries of Providence

By Bishop Kay

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# THE MYSTERIES OF PROVIDENCE AND OF GRACE

AS ILLUSTRATED

## IN THE STORY OF LAZARUS

BEING MEDITATIONS DELIVERED IN TRINITY CATHEDRAL, EASTON, MD., IN LENT, 1884

BY

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# PREFATORY NOTE.

THE frequent requests made that a volume of the sermons of the late Bishop of Easton be published, is a sufficient reason for the appearance of this little book. Those who read it may need no reason other than the book itself. It was his wish that nothing biographical should be published. Doubtless, therefore, it is more in accordance with the views he expressed, as it will be also more helpful to others, that there should be published, not an account of his life, but rather the results of his mature thought, the fruit of a devout, poetic and sympathetic nature, which may, by the blessing of God, serve to elevate and refine many lives.

Though intended for delivery, and not for publication, it has been thought best to leave these meditations substantially as they were originally written.

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# I.

# THE MYSTERY OF SICKNESS AND GRIEF.

## I.

# THE MYSTERY OF SICKNESS AND GRIEF.

"*Lord, behold, he whom Thou lovest is sick.*"—St. John, xi. 3.

In each several soul of man we may recognize a representative of the race, an epitome of the human family. To know one human life thoroughly, in its inner experiences as well as its external accidents, is largely to know the joy and sorrow, the conquest and defeat, the meanness and the greatness, of mankind at large.

The same is true of the household. Each family-home is a microcosm, a world in miniature. The stage is narrow, the actors few; but in the palace and in the hovel, the world-story is exhibited as in the great outside arena. In the contracted as in the larger sphere, the same drama proceeds; with its shifting scenes

of joy and pain, doubt and trust, love and variance, ending in the invariable, tragic result of death.

I propose for your Lenten meditations certain mysteries of our natural and of our spiritual life. One might ask, Why interweave them with the story of Lazarus? Why not discuss them independently, and apart from any personal complication?

I answer, because such mode of treatment brings these mysteries within the grasp of our practical thought. In the recital of what once happened at a veritable home in Bethany, we guard against unreality and idle speculation. We have only to change the designation, to insert our own baptismal names, and the story, much of it, seems to have been written of ourselves.

Yet, again, in our homes brothers and sisters live together as at Bethany, defended, instructed, comforted, by the presence of a Divine friend. Only our eyes are holden and we see Him not. But at Bethany He was manifest in deed and word, in the fulness of compassion, in the majesty of power. To see

Him there may help us to discern Him at our own hearthstone.

Some two miles from Jerusalem, on the farther slope of the Mount of Olives, lay the village of Bethany. In that village, besides the house of Simon the Leper, there was a home to which our Lord often resorted, its inmates being a brother and two sisters. The brother, a lovable person indeed, for his intimacy with our Lord seems to have been exceeded by that of St. John alone. We think of him as grave, self-contained and reticent; content, even when restored by miracle, to honor his Deliverer by the silence of his living presence. The sisters, very unlike, types severally of the active and the contemplative in religion, yet of one mind in honoring Him who adorned their home with His presence.

It is sufficient evidence of their worth, that "Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus;" Martha being mentioned first in order, perchance lest, in view of one deserved rebuke, we should depreciate her worth.

Now, it has come to pass that trouble enters

this favored home. Lazarus sickens, and in his sickness is nigh unto death. The Master was outside the limits of Judea, abiding beyond Jordan. In their extremity the sisters sent a message to Him.

The sketch is intensely human. We know all about it. The access of disease; the unresisted march of fever; the darkened room; Martha careless of her housekeeping, Mary emulating her sister's activity; their tearful eyes weary with the long vigil, and both frightened to the very centre of their being at the thought that presently the family circle is to be rudely broken, and the two women to be left alone in the house from which the brightness has all gone away.

We know all about it. We have watched and wrestled. We have looked abroad and invoked the presence of any who might help, or, if they could not help, sustain.

We have here suggested the mystery of sickness and grief. Well does the brief message of the sisters express that mystery. "Lord, behold," they say. It is a word of emphasis and wonder. "Lord, behold." Think

of it, mark it as a thing notable and unaccountable. "Lord, behold, he whom Thou lovest is sick."

If it had been a man whom Jesus hated,—supposing it possible for Him to hate,—or one of whom He disapproved, with whom He was angry, there would be no room for marvel. We would say, The sickness is for rebuke; it is penalty incurred by reason of transgression; the suspense of a stewardship not faithfully discharged.

But, "Lord, behold, he whom Thou lovest is sick." Here is the mystery. Why should those who love Jesus, and whom He loves in return, be sick and languishing, be wounded in the very purest of their affections, finding in that very sensibility which the love of Jesus has fostered the keenest aggravation of sorrow?

The instance is not isolated. It is commonly observed that the loveliest are singled out for sacrifice, the keenest trials sent to such as most keenly feel them and least deserve them.

Can any light be thrown upon this mystery?

It cannot be made all clear. The childlike saint desires not so much. He prefers to take somewhat on trust, and to tarry the Lord's leisure for the breaking of the mystic seals. Some token for good, however, we crave, here in the land of the living; some response to the cry that will well up from our overburdened soul: "Show me wherefore Thou contendest with me."

And so I reach my theme: What light does the story of Lazarus throw upon the mystery of sickness and its attendant griefs, and by implication on all the afflictions of God's saints?

### I. IT LIGHTENS THE MYSTERY TO KNOW THAT THIS DISCIPLINE, HOWEVER PAINFUL, IS NOT FATAL.

The sickness of Lazarus was what we call mortal. Yet our Lord's first comment on the news was, "This sickness is *not* unto death."

With this word in mind, we are bold to say of every calamity sent to the friends of God, it may be very painful and hard to endure, seemingly it may be destructive of the life; but, for all that, it is not unto death.

There is indeed a sorrow that worketh death. It is possible for one to be swallowed up of overmuch sorrow. When calamities great and long-continued come to us, it is a natural apprehension that they will actually engulf us ; that in the shock peace, happiness, usefulness, will suffer utter wreck.

Such apprehension is natural to those especially who have lived out the best of their days, and are descending into the vale. The family circle is broken by death ; and they say, like Israel, " If I am bereaved of my children, I am bereaved." Those gone, there is nothing left worth saving.

Or else, finding one's self with the load of care and responsibility in no wise diminished, while the endurance and the activity are greatly lessened ; with others as dependent as ever upon us, while we are less and less equal to the task of guidance and protection,—prone are we to think that life will utterly break down, and life's work prove a failure.

But mortal sufferings are not really death. Out of weakness groweth strength. In blindness and captivity, we may, like Samson, dis-

play a more magnificent championship than in the days of health and freedom. Winter and spring unite to tell us that seeming death is the assurance of a truer life, and the prelude to it. He who numbers the very hairs of our heads asks us, Who is he that will harm you if ye be followers of that which is good? He whom Jesus loves may be sick; but unto death, never!

Where the love of Jesus rests, Death, not what men call death, but Death, the true Destroyer, may not enter. It is when poverty and persecution have most sorely beset them, when pain abounded and the grave was yawning for them, that those whom Jesus loved have been most jubilant. In the assurance of love, Death is not Death. All the day are we killed, but the evening still finds us conquerors. "Neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

I trust that this is not the language of mere

paradox and sentimentality. I would not encourage you to conjure up imaginary griefs, or to persuade yourselves that you are martyrs.

In all truth and soberness, not a few of us, who out of love to Jesus are trying in some poor way to keep Lent, do know that we have a real trouble; a something, either about ourselves or others, which may be called a soul-sickness. It is a trouble, the mystery of which we may not altogether solve. Let us, in the light of this narration, write one thing down as absolutely secure. It is not unto death. Those whom Jesus loves, He doth discipline, but not destroy. "I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the Lord." "The Lord hath chastened and corrected me, but He hath not given me over unto death."

2. THE MYSTERY OF SICKNESS, PAIN AND GRIEF IS STILL FURTHER LIGHTENED, THAT THEY ARE FOR THE GLORY OF GOD.

"This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, and that the Son of God may be glorified thereby."

We know full well how love strengthens endurance. If an affectionate child must endure a painful operation, how powerful is the argument of the mother's whisper, "Try to bear it for my sake." But loyalty is a mightier principle than love itself. The loyalty of wife to husband, of child to parents, of soldier to his commander, of patriot to his country's cause, who knows not its power to make men indifferent to hardships, losses and pains?

The glory of God is involved in our discipline, and our behavior under it. God is glorified in His saints; in their patience and their perseverance. God is glorified when we so endure trouble, as to vindicate His word that all things work together for the good of such as love Him.

In the beginning of the religious life, there is indeed an attraction of love, but largely commingled with considerations of personal safety, happiness and reward. But in the maturer saint, while these influences still remain, loyalty to the Master becomes the ruling passion of the soul.

The loyalty of the Son to the Father be-

comes the pattern of our loyalty to the Son. Wonderfully clear and distinct is that pattern. "The hour is come," said Jesus. There were not hid from Him the dread and darkness of that hour. He did not close His eyes to its horrors. "Now is my soul troubled, and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour? . . . Father, glorify Thy name."

See how loyalty to the Father drove back each struggling cry for exemption. See how zeal for the Father's glory ingulfed all other thoughts. Follow out the story, and note how, in extremest pains, recollection was never off its guard; but each act, each word, was scrupulously ordered to this supreme end, the glory of God.

We reach here a high thought,—the real office of the Church, and of each Church-child as well; the mystery which from the beginning hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ.

The intent of all divine regimen and institution here on earth is, "That unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the Church the manifold wisdom of God."

Yes, the mighty ones around the glory-throne, returned from searching a universe for illustrations of His greatness, tell out that story before the throne, and cry one to another: "Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord of Hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory."

And mingled with their songs, comes up from earth the Church's incense, publishing to the principalities and powers themselves the manifold wisdom of God. Think not that the golden vials are found in the consecrated Church alone. From many a hovel of poverty endured, from many a bed of anguish, from many a breast most heavily laden, there comes, struggling through the sobs of natural distress, the essential chant of the Church above and below: "Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost."

But there is another and a very awful thought touching the connection of all life's incidents with the infinite scheme,—the room for each Christian sigh in the eternal music of the spheres.

In the sight of God, things are not great and small as they seem to us, but the minor

incidents of life are part and parcel of the infinite plan.

Are you incredulous of this? Does it seem unreasonable that the details in the life of one so insignificant can have any bearing on the coming of the Christ and the regeneration of the universe?

Assuredly Martha and Mary had equal cause thus to reason. Bethany was but a mean village, and they were not the sort of folk to influence the world's destiny. How could it seriously affect any great interest, whether Lazarus were in health or in sickness, whether they wept or laughed?

Not only have we our Lord's word that these domestic incidents were for the glory of God, but the subsequent history fully explains the connection. The story of Lazarus is in St. John's narrative part of the story of the Cross. The sickness of Lazarus brought about our Lord's return from Jordan to Judea where the Jews of late sought to stone him. The raising of Lazarus was that which utterly infuriated the priests, and caused them to convene that council at which it was finally de-

termined that this man must die. "From that day forth they took counsel together for to put Him to death."

We touch here the borders of another mystery, specially to be considered hereafter,—man helping or hindering God.

But we are safe when we deal with facts. Here is proof unimpeachable that the glorious things of the Cross were bound up in the humble fortunes of a family at Bethany. The inference is not strained; besides inference, it has no small attestation in the Bible, that the vicissitudes in the life of those whom Jesus loves are also incidents in the all-comprehensive march of Providence and of Redemption.

We often feel more spiritual distress than we exhibit to others. When we go abroad, it is an instinct to anoint the head and wash the face. Only weak-minded people display their sackcloth and ashes. But in our privacy, how often is Satan near tempting us to discontent and sadness. He says, "You have opened your heart to Jesus, and given Him the place of honor there. You have cumbered yourself with His service, or sat patient at His feet.

You say He loves you. Expound the mystery of a love which provides no exemption from the ills of life, for the objects of love. Explain why He hath withholden prosperity, why He hath taken away the treasures of the house, why He hath added heavy burdens and grievous to be borne."

O brother, thou need'st not flee in such an hour, nor stop thine ears to the sneering voice. Listen to all he may say. The Bible is near thee, thine unfailing armory; and this eleventh chapter of S. John is in itself shield and sword.

Say boldly: I am not careful to answer thee. I seek not in this land of shadows to discern the mystery of good and evil. But thus much I know, and it is enough for me to know. These my sorrows are not unto death, but unto life eternal.

These my sorrows are not meaningless nor purposeless. They are, as surely as the tears of Martha and of Mary, for the glory of God, and that the Son of God may be glorified thereby.

The heavens are lit up with the brightness

of many stars. And in the celestial firmament declaring the glory of God there is a high place for burning and shining lights; but need also of the twinkling stars, the humbler saints, who loved at least a little, and who strove to endure, in faith and with thanksgiving, the discipline of pain.

## II.

# THE MYSTERY OF THE DIVINE INDIFFERENCE.

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## II.

## THE MYSTERY OF THE DIVINE INDIFFERENCE.

"*When He had heard therefore that he was sick, He abode two days still in the same place where He was.*"—ST. JOHN, xi. 6.

WHEN the message came, "He whom Thou lovest is sick," our Lord did seemingly make light of it. "This sickness is not unto death," He said; and He moved not from His place.

And yet Lazarus was dying, and the sisters were crushed under the calamity.

And yet again, "Jesus wept" presently at the thought of their sorrows; and said the Jews, "Behold how He loved him."

My theme is, The Mystery of the Divine Indifference. The illustration is of the Christ, really sympathetic, loving, weeping; yet for the time irresponsive, lingering by the way, permitting the calamity which by a word might be averted.

It was this indifference which added more bitterness to the bereavement, bitter as it was without it. It was this indifference which led each sister, separate and apart, to cry, "Lord, if Thou hadst been here, my brother had not died."

Yes, Lazarus might have been spared; only Jesus was not interested enough about the matter to hasten to him, and to give timely relief. Two long, weary days of hope deferred and at last frustrated; and Jesus the while resting inactively by the bank of Jordan.

Good women as these were, it seems that the sisters were tempted to think hardly of the Divine Friend. There is a touch of complaint and remonstrance in their lamentation.

Our Lenten subjects are sometimes announced in the local journals, and attract, at least from the many, a casual attention. "What has the preacher to talk about this Lent? 'The Mystery of Pain and Grief,'" says one to himself: "that is a theme of interest to all. But 'The Mystery of the Divine Indifference' concerns me not: it is an unreality. The blow that wounds me, the calamity which crushes me, these are real things. These are substan-

tial facts. But whether God careth or careth not, neither diminishes my pain nor adds to it."

My duties carry me at times into homes, pleasant and hospitable, where evidences of domestic affection are not lacking. And I marvel to converse with one and another, intelligent, honest, kind, to whose peace and comfort God is in no wise a necessity. So the machine grinds, they care not for its author. The presence of Jesus at the marriage would add nothing to the festive joy. His absence at the funeral would import no additional element of sorrow. Utterly indifferent to God, it troubles them not if God seem indifferent to them.

Is our theme, then, unreal or unpractical? Does it touch our interior consciousness? Is there such a mystery and a huge grief that grow out of it?

If we turn to the Book of Psalms, the handbook of religious experiences, the poetic expression of the spiritual joys and sorrows common to the race, it abounds in allusions of this sort. "Why standest Thou afar off, O Lord? Why hidest Thou Thyself in times of trouble?"

"How long wilt Thou forget me, O Lord? forever? how long wilt Thou hide Thy face from me?" are specimens of the complaints continually recurring. The taunt of the Enemy hardest to endure is that which seems to have so much truth in it, "Where is now thy God?" The seeming indifference of God to the deserts of good men and bad, and to the heavier sorrows of the good, is the specific theme of the Seventy-third Psalm.

Or, if we turn to the Lamentations of Jeremiah, the Lenten hand-book of the sorrowful ones, how elaborately is this mystery of Divine Indifference there set out! The complaint is not merely of wormwood, gall and gravel-stones, of broken bones and crooked paths and the environment of derision. The climax of it all is, "Also when I cry and shout, He shutteth out my prayer."

Among the most familiar illustrations of spiritual destitution is that of a parched and thirsty land, appealing, apparently in vain, to a brazen, unpitying sky.

If there be some to whom the sympathy of God is a superfluity, there are those also to

whom it is a necessity. In spite of all our deficiencies, we may claim thus much for ourselves. We have never yet been able in our troubles to dispense with the love of God. We have never been so down-hearted as when we have entertained the suspicion that God does not care. Even when we have not surrendered our faith in His invisible presence, the sorest of life's disciplines is the absence of its manifestation. The bitterest cry that has ever been wrung from suffering humanity is heard in the voice of its representative, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?"

I am not propounding something morbid, imaginative, unreal. I am dealing with a trial and a temptation familiar to the saints of God; a trial incident to the spiritual strivings of the men and women for whom I write. Observe that this abiding two days still beyond Jordan stands not alone in our Lord's history. The Syrophenician woman cried long and piteously before her words were heeded at all, and even then our Joseph spake roughly to her. Many a request for healing found seeming reluctance, and many a cure was deferred for a season.

In the desperate hour when the bark of the disciples could not outride the storm, and our Lord went to their relief, He made as though He would pass by them upon some other errand. How did they uplift their voices and battle with the howling of the storm, before He appeared to notice their distress or directed His steps towards them!

To the parallels within our own experience, to instances like these, I shall have occasion presently to refer. But let us first of all discern so much as may be discerned of the reasons which induced our Lord, when He knew that Lazarus was sick, to abide still two days in the place where He was. For the story of human life is like this eleventh chapter of St. John. We must read it all through before we can make anything of its earlier verses.

1. OUR LORD'S SEEMING INDIFFERENCE TO THE SORROWS OF THESE HOLY WOMEN SERVED TO INTENSIFY THEIR SENSE OF NEED AND THEIR DEPENDENCE UPON HIM.

In the family government, the purest type on earth of the Divine government, we cannot

be too solicitous for the happiness of our children; but we find it best not to manifest all of that solicitude. We cannot be too ready to forgive, too ready to wipe away the tears; but it is best to defer the reconciliation a little while, and not too hastily to dry up the tears.

For children are prone to accept the parental love and protection as a matter of right and a thing of course, to be demanded rather than requested, to be accepted and presently forgotten. Moreover, the child-nature is heedless and superficial. Its lessons of pain, of self-reproach, of relief and gratitude, are easily learned and as easily forgotten.

O ye who murmur at the restraint of the Divine love, think for a moment how often you seemed indifferent to that longing in your child's heart which you were fully determined to gratify! How often have you withheld forgiveness, and preserved the reproachful countenance, when the soul was most full of tenderness, and the arms of the heart were already outspread to embrace the infant sinner! The demands we make upon the faith and endurance of our offspring—how large they

are! In some of life's exigencies, they are simply enormous; as when we bid him consent to be reduced to insensibility, while the surgeon shall lacerate his body. How strange that we should fret and doubt when the Heavenly Father makes the like demand on us!

If when Lazarus first sickened the Lord had promptly attended and immediately relieved, many bitter pains would have been spared those loving hearts. But we know enough of human nature to understand that the prolonged absence intensified the longing for the actual presence. I need only suggest the thought,—each one can readily follow it out,—how in that interval the sisters would be glad to gather anew the recollections of His graciousness and benignity; how they would bethink themselves whether they had worthily entertained so great a guest; how they would increasingly let go their dependence on earthly helps and healers, and the whole heart go out in desperate longing for the one only Friend adequate to their need.

So, then, some light is thrown upon the mystery of the Divine indifference, when we con-

sider that it is a discipline of love—love reticent and passive for a season, that the responsive love it seeks to educate many learn deeper lessons of dependence, and reach out more longingly after its supreme comforter.

There is another thought in much the same direction.

### 2. THE SEEMING INDIFFERENCE STRENGTHENED THEIR FAITH.

For when Jesus comes at last to Bethany, do their words imply that Faith had become debilitated by His absence, or are the utterances of Faith equivocal and uncertain? Far from it. Jesus propounds to Martha, in her utmost desolation, that sublimest of His self-assertions, "I am the Resurrection and the Life."

"Believest thou this?" He says. And the sorrow-stricken woman looks up through her tears, looks on him the Jewish carpenter, the travel-worn, the lingerer by the way. "She saith unto him, Yea, Lord, I believe that Thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world."

Yes, so it is. Faith is a hardy plant. In

the fat soil of prosperity, its growth is often languid, or it is choked with other things. But where it is planted in some crevice of the naked rock, where earth favors it not, and despairing of earthly aids it makes its helpless appeal to the winds of God to bring it nourishment, to the sunshine of God to cheer it, to the dews of God to refresh it, it attains its loveliest proportions.

So it is that God seems to strengthen faith, less by what He gives than by what He takes away. The experience of life furnishes many illustrations of the fact. I am not careful to explain the apparent paradox. So it is: men have walked with God in pleasant paths, with many tokens of a favoring presence, while yet they were dull of heart and slow to believe. But presently in the wilderness of distress, in the storm of temptation, the darkness of the eclipse of mercy, Faith has found a new life, has discovered that *reserve of love* which only can account for its momentary inertness; and in that dark hour has witnessed a better confession than in all the sunshine of the life before.

Light is still further thrown upon the mys-

tery of the Divine indifference, when we remember

3. THAT THE REFUSAL PREMATURELY TO INTERVENE MADE ROOM FOR A LARGER BLESSING.

Yes, in denying to the sisters the blessing which they craved, our Lord intended for them a blessing which should make their cup overflow. In declining the accustomed miracle of healing, He prepared the way for the miracle of Resurrection, the most majestic and astounding of all the miracles, excepting that only of the Easter-day.

It would have been cause for life-long thankfulness, had He responded quickly to their summons, and hastened to lay the hand of healing on the fevered brow, and with a word only caused the king of terrors to relax his hold upon his captive. He refused them that boon; but in refusing it He gave them another, far beyond anything they had dared to ask or even think.

The home at Bethany becomes a station in the *via dolorosa*—the way of the cross. The

names of those neglected ones become inextricably interwoven in the story of redemption completed; and in the roll-call of the saints these obscure mourners find renown and perpetual memorial, as the "women who received their dead raised to life again."

I should weary you if I should undertake to remind you out of the Book of God, or out of the book of your own experience, of the debt of thankfulness we owe to Almighty God for the mercies He has refused, and for the larger mercies which came to us by reason of such refusal. The light and momentary affliction, of sorrows apparently disregarded, is God's own way of working out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

Standing, then, at the beginning of the chapter, our Lord's lingering at Jordan might seem inexplicable. But looking backward from the close, three things are apparent:

(1) *The Lord's delay intensified in his friends the sense of their need of Him.*

(2) *It actually invigorated their faith in Him.*

(3) *It prepared the way for unimagined blessing.*

Reflections such as these find ready application to two classes of persons,—the disappointed seekers after God, and the discouraged aspirants after a truer life in God; cases which have so many features in common that we need not hesitate to consider them together.

It happens, then, that a careless man of the world is disturbed in his carelessness. Some outcry of reproachful conscience, some heart-crushing sorrow, some keen arrow from the quiver of God's Word, finds the weak place in the armor of his indifference; and so the fast-closed door of his heart stands a little way ajar, and angel-whispers, heretofore unheard, find their way into the inner chamber of his consciousness.

And soon the good news is carried up to a sympathizing Heaven, "Behold, he prayeth." God's eye beholds him in his closet, with the long-neglected Word of Life open before him; beholds him on his knees, essaying some poor beginnings of prayer. Some tokens there are of shame for the perverted life, and yearnings after a better. Some voice there is of sins renounced, and of good resolutions for the

guidance of the future. His feet are turned towards the House of God, his attention is given to the word spoken; perhaps he so far overcomes the fear of man, as, meekly kneeling on his knees, to make his own confession of the lost sheep, the undone sinner, the dust and ashes and vile earth.

And presently disappointment grows up. I am none the better, he says, for these endeavors, and farther than ever from my peace. No father, says he, has risen from his place to welcome the prodigal's return. I see at the window no kind eyes regarding me as I stand out in the cold, but only the unsympathetic countenance of a virtuous elder brother, who has no confidence in the sincerity of the yearning for Father, Home and Brotherhood, which have brought me back. I have exposed my heart to the plough-share of the law, and it remains harder than the nether millstone. I have cried out in my extremity for love, pity and forgiveness, and they stand staring and looking at me. I have renounced, and found no strength to observe the renunciation. I have vowed and promised, only to redouble

my shame and grief by the spectacle of violated pledges. I re-enact, in my own experience, the story of the traveller, bleeding, half-dead, on the way; while not only Priest and Levite, but even the Good Samaritan, pass by on the other side, and leave me unpitied and untended. It is under disappointment like this, that one and another have begun the race ardently, and soon abandoned it despairingly.

Akin to this experience is that of the discouraged child of God. He sets apart a season to seek a more intimate self-knowledge, to attain greater proficiency in the religious life, to seek more intimate communion with the loving and the living Lord.

Alas! he says, never has it been more difficult for me to fasten my attention, and to order my life by rule and method. Never have the cares of life been more vexatious, and the good seed more choked in its growth, than now; seldom have I had less comfort in my devotions than now. My good intents seem to be foiled; discretion fails; zeal intermits; privileges fail to refresh; and even my favorite hymns give not out their music.

And both unite to ask, the disappointed seeker after God, and the discouraged saint of God, If it be so, as you have often told us in comfortable words, why am I thus? Why this mystery of the Divine Indifference, of Jesus lingering so far away, when I so much need Him; when I have sent Him at least the halting messenger of my prayers, to tell Him that I am worn and weary, disconsolate, suffering, sick, dying, threatened with the loss of all worth having, unless He come speedily to my relief.

Let us assure ourselves that the delays of grace proceed not from indifference to our need.

It is easy to send a messenger in our extremity, and ask relief in our pain. But it is not so easy to realize how great a thing it is to restore the sick soul to health, or at how awful a sacrifice alone is it possible even for the Son of God to raise a dead soul to life again. If Christ consents to raise Lazarus at Bethany, He consents in the same moment to surrender, as a ransom, His own life on Calvary.

To deepen and intensify your sense of help-

lessness and utter dependence on Him; to increase your faith in Him, the confidence that grows up out of self-despair; to come to you, when the discipline of delay has accomplished its work, with a fulness of blessing which there shall not be room enough to receive,—such are the purposes of Him whom you love and by whom you are beloved.

Or, in brief, we have to learn the meaning of that word DUTY.

Duty keeps us true to religious employments, even when we find no present satisfaction in them. Duty keeps us fighting on, even when the battle seems to go against us. Duty makes us cling to God, even when He seems to cast us out.

And what is Duty, save Faith evidenced in action? when to all seeming discouragements and impossibilities of safety, we oppose that high conviction, the Son of God loved me and loves me still: He gave Himself for me, and He will never forsake me.

Learn, then, the excellence of patient waiting upon God. In the present our eyes fail, perchance, in waiting for His salvation. But, if

Faith fail not as well, it may even in time be ours to sing: "I waited patiently for the Lord, and he inclined unto me, and heard my calling."

True, in very love, He lingered a little while. But, when He came, it was to comfort all my sorrows, to banish all my tears, to restore all my dead things to life again, to inscribe my unworthy name in the volume of love and of renown.

# III.

# THE MYSTERY OF DEATH.

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"*Then said Jesus unto them plainly, Lazarus is dead.*"
—St. John, xi. 14.

In our communings one with another, howbeit we may use syllables and words in common, we may none the less be speaking in languages so diverse, that the speech of one is unintelligible to the other.

I might give a thousand illustrations. Take the common word *Frolic*. In one man's mouth it means the innocent, playful exuberance of animal life and spirits: in the mouth of another it means the wild orgy, the shameful excess. A guileless child and a vicious man utter the same word; but they mean not the same thing, and neither can understand the language of the other.

Now when the messenger came from Bethany, our Lord began by speaking to the disciples in

the celestial tongue. "This sickness is not unto death," He said; and again after two days: "Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep."

Now Jesus was indeed speaking of natural death; but He used the celestial language, which makes of death a pleasant slumber, the anticipation of a glad awakening.

The disciples were not as yet proficients in such high discourse. "Lord," said they, "if he sleep, he shall do well." "They thought that he had spoken of taking of rest in sleep." Our Lord then condescends to their infirmity, adopts their own prosaic speech. "Then said Jesus unto them plainly, Lazarus is dead."

I have undertaken to speak to you of THE MYSTERY OF DEATH. In what language shall we discourse? If we use the earthly tongue, then plainly Lazarus is dead, and death is death. But if we discourse in the heavenly language, then is Lazarus not altogether dead: he sleepeth in seeming death, and is presently to be awakened.

Let us approach this mystery from either side. Let us survey it with the eye of sense

and with the eye of faith. Let us follow the mere human analysis and the divine explanation of what men call Death.

## I. WHAT CAN OUR UNAIDED POWERS MAKE OF THE MYSTERY OF DEATH?

There are those who tell us that all we see and know is matter and force. Thought is a secretion of the brain; a mode of its activity; a change of its molecules; a force generated in the nerve-centres and dismissed along nerve-fibres, much as the telegraph battery, with a few chemicals, engenders and transmits a pulse of energy along conducting wires. Only this human activity, more unfortunate than the mechanical invention, is automatic and has no intelligent governor. There is in the universe no angel, no spirit, no God—nothing but what we can see and handle; rock, wood, flesh, in varied forms and combinations. There is nothing else that is real. Soul, if by soul one means aught else than the mere ebbing and flowing of material forces, there is none. The word mind, or the word soul, are convenient expressions in the classification of certain

physical agitations; but they have no meaning, no existence, apart from the bodily organism. The soul is but a melody of continuous vibrations: when the instrument is still, the song is ended.

If it be superfluous to allude to these formulated disbeliefs of things spiritual, I may remind you, that, for all practical purposes, they differ very little from the mere worldliness which regards the earthly life of man in and for itself alone. Those who give religion the go-by, who regard life and death purely in themselves, are in fact as much materialists as those who reason about it. Now, to all such this mystery of death is the most inscrutable of all mysteries. We cannot get away from it, for it confronts us at every turn. We cannot help thinking about it; for if the priest is silent, the physician warns: if we avoid the Church, we are compelled to visit the graveyard.

(*a*) Look at death in its physical aspect. The human body is the most perfect thing in all the world,—so strong, so nimble, so delicate in its sensations, so admirably knit together. In its best illustrations it has a grace and

beauty which lie at the foundation of all art. The world never wearies of looking on its great ideals.

And who may describe the grandeur and the loveliness of what we call expression?—the sweet innocence of the baby-face, and later on the intelligence that flashes in the eye, or the love that softens its glance. And then Death intervenes. I will not describe his work. One can scarce bear to think of it. It is enough to say of it, that when he has touched the noblest and fairest of our race, so changed are they, that we must hasten to bury our dead out of our sight. A generation passes, and we have occasion to seek them again. Alas! there is nothing left but some fragments of bone or a tuft of hair. A mystery is here. Why should a thing so curiously fashioned be so utterly wasted? Why should a thing so fair become so foul.

No artist chisels out even the cold marble image, intending when it is perfected to shatter it to pieces with one blow of his hammer. Was this warm, breathing image made only to be marred? Men do not build fair houses

only to apply the torch to them, nor do they bring into their homes lovely things and expel them presently; at one moment caressing and admiring them, and at another burying them deep with faces averted from them.

Shall one tell us to our comfort, that the components of this body do not perish, but after the dissolution we are re-combined in other forms, some being wafted up into the cloud, and others smiling once more upon earth in blossoms and flowers? There is no comfort, no explanation here. It helps not, if the marble image only of my friend be crushed, to tell me that it is all there, only in a thousand comminuted fragments. The fragments are not the image. That exists not in the fragments. It is as water poured upon the ground, which cannot be gathered up again.

Such is the mystery of physical death as seen from the stand-point of time. A dark enigma, and yet a horrible reality; a reckless waste, a wanton making only to unmake; every way hateful to think about, horrible to look at. Explain this mystery, we demand of

Nature. Frank, indeed, but cheerless and uninstructive, is the reply. She saith unto us plainly, Lazarus is dead.

(*b*) Consider the mystery of the death of mind as well as body. For this man had intellect as well as body, and the glory of the body was in its obedient ministrations to the thoughts.

This Lazarus had hands wherewith he builded houses and gathered the fruits of the earth. These went not away in his departure. He bequeathed them a legacy to his survivors. But that was not all of him. He had, so to speak, the hands of thought, busy in accumulating all manner of knowledge, busy in constructing all manner of schemes, personal, domestic, social.

But now all these thoughts have perished. The farm and the merchandise are transmitted to his children. But the experiences of life and the wisdom consequent thereon, the knowledge of many languages, the result of arduous studies, all the fair fabric of hope and aspiration,—all these are dissolved into thin air. The children assume his material wealth

just as he left it ; but as for this more valuable store of wisdom, experience, learning, forecast, they have no inheritance in it, and must begin, as he began, at the very alphabet of life.

Indeed, this reflection often swallows up all others, as we look upon the dead man. What insensibility is there! Yesterday so busy, to-day so idle. Yesterday so thoughtful, to-day lying in worse than stupor.

The transformation is as of some fair ship, speeding toward a chosen port, with all sail set, and all hands on the alert, but suddenly and hopelessly becalmed in mid-ocean ; tossing on the swell a little while, but presently its crew transformed to spectres, its frame dissolved, its cordage rotten, its rare freight of bright gold and sweet spices lost forever to human view in the unfathomable depth.

Great is the mystery of living, active thought, as in a moment arrested, spell-bound, frustrated.

We consult our comrades, whose wisdom, like our own, rises not above earth; and they tell us, knowledge, hope, aspiration, all have reached their bound. It is plain, only too

plain, the flame of living thought is extinguished, and Lazarus is dead.

(*c*) Consider the mystery of defeated affections. This Lazarus stood not in the world a solitary unit detached from all others, so that in the crash of his being, other fortunes were unaffected. All his life long he had been throwing out the tendrils of affection around others, and all his life long others had been enfolding him in their affections. The stroke of death which laid him low was as the felling of a tree in some tropic forest, involving in its fall the rude severance of frail and tender things to which it had served as a trellis and support.

Not only is Lazarus dead, but the home receives a fatal blow. The mastership is gone, the fraternal communings are ended, the smile of hospitality has been converted into rigid indifference. All the pleasant up-growths of long years of sympathizing companionship are in a moment uprooted and destroyed.

What a mystery is here! Love, as it is the high duty, so also is it the prime necessity of our being. O mystery of mysteries, that love

itself should be the chief minister of pain! The first-born child is laid in our arms, opening in our hearts a fountain sealed and unsuspected, but only that after the first joy we may cry out, Marah, bitterness. We suffer our most unselfish affections to go out after parent, wife, brother, friend, and we become strangely dependent on their responsive smile and genial word, but only that we may wake up to a sense of utter impoverishment. Alas! we cry, where are all those warm affections wherein we basked as in the sunshine? The men of the world shake their heads mournfully in reply. All that goodness, all that kindness must henceforth be numbered among the things that have been, and survive in memory alone, or be reproduced only in the fantastic dreams of night. For Nature says plainly and finally of him whose living affection was most necessary to us, Lazarus is dead.

I am not obtruding unrealities upon you. The world is full of materialists. Some are learned, some ignorant. Some have learned it in books, others have dropped into it through inattention and self-indulgence.

The world is full of materialists, theoretical or practical, who will not think, will not speak of life and death, save in the language of the mixed multitude among whom they dwell.

With us of the clergy, the experience is very far from unfamiliar. One sends for us, perchance, to bury his child. We sit with him beside his hearth when the funeral is over, and endeavor to speak some words to him in the heavenly language; some word about the love of Jesus for the little children, and the blessedness of Holy Innocents. But such speech is as uninteresting to him as it is unintelligible.

So beautiful a child, he says; and now I have left him to moulder in the churchyard. So bright a boy, so beaming with intelligence, so full of promise,—all come to an end. So tender-hearted, loving, pitiful, watching at the gate for my return when I had gone away, and never henceforth to look for me, to embrace me again. I find no comfort, I discern no light, I see no reason for the sorrow, I have no hope. The refrain of all he says is, Lazarus is dead: plainly he is dead. The fair temple of the body, the bright sparkling of the

intelligence, the rich wealth of the affections, yes, he and all his endowments are utterly and absolutely dead.

All this is only too true, if we wilfully shut our eyes to the invisible but revealed, if we admit no words into our vocabulary save the earth-born language of the present time.

With this spectacle of Death, each one of us must at times be inevitably confronted, under circumstances which will not permit the earnest "*Wherefore*" to be silenced. And, if regarded as we have thus far regarded it, the mystery of Death stands unrelieved by one ray of enlightenment or by one whisper of encouragement.

There standest thou, O King of terrors, holding thy subjects all their life in bondage. Of all tyrants, thou art the most direful and relentless; of all spectres, the most hideous; of all enemies, the most cruel. Keen is thy sting, fatal thy dart, adamantine are thy chains. The mournfullest group in all the world is that of the mourners on the one side, and thou, O Death, upon the other, while the dead man lies in the midst; while all heavenly

accents are unheard, and thou, without resistance, utterest thy dirge in the ears of broken-hearted mortals: Lazarus is dead; plainly, Lazarus is dead.

But it is high time that we converse of Death in a better and truer tongue. One has come to us, as of old to His friends at Bethany, to us tired and heart-sick in view of this inscrutable mystery,—come to tell us "The Lord God hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary."

For we, thanks be to God, are children of the Spirit and of the Church. In our infancy we essayed the heavenly language first. We have become confused only when we have been deafened with the Babel-sounds of earth.

When the sojourner in a strange land, perplexed amid palaces and ruins, amid things beautiful and hideous, catches the voice of a guide who can speak to him in his own tongue wherein he was born, he turns to him instinctively as Mary to the Gardener, and saith, Rabboni, my Master!

We have been considering what our unaided

powers tell us of the mystery of Death; let us now bethink us

### 2. WHAT LIGHT DOES JESUS THROW UPON THIS MYSTERY?

And here I will confine myself to His two brief sayings about Lazarus, which I have so often quoted, reserving the Resurrection theme for its own special consideration. "This sickness is not unto death." You have often heard that there is in the Greek language a delicacy and precision which adapted it specially for the sacred uses of the New Testament. So here: our Lord refrains from using the word appropriate to death final and absolute. He does not say exactly, "Lazarus is dead," but rather, "Lazarus has died." Is this distinction too delicate to be grasped? I think not. As you sit in the darkened room, where one is passing away, the kind physician and the sympathizing priest utter each of them the language appropriate to his function. The physician says, "He is dying now," and you bow your head in resignation. The priest says, "He is not sick unto death," and you raise

your face in grateful assent. Both words are true in their place: but "not unto death" is the truer of the two.

All this means that death is not the destruction of the man. It is possible for man to survive death. Not merely are the materials out of which the man is builded incapable of annihilation, but the personality itself—that being, compounded of body, soul and spirit, whom we call by the name of Lazarus—is indestructible. Survival is compatible with death.

Such is the assurance of Him Who made man, and Who, vigilant of his creature, suffers not a hair of his head to perish, much less anything that belongs to the integrity of his being.

And, in the light of this revelation, there are not a few signs and tokens all around us, not understood before, which fall into strange harmony with the divine utterance. We see men shorn of limb after limb, of sense after sense, and they still survive. In the medical museum one may see the cast of a man's head, which is an eminent illustration. While engaged in blasting, a tamping-iron, by reason of premature explosion, passed into his cheek and clean

through his skull, emerging on the top of the head. And yet he survived and recovered health, nor was reason destroyed by the loss of brain substance involved.

There are not a few blended lights to illumine the sacred page. Man lives: but life is an inscrutable mystery. In view of the shocks and losses through which it has passed, we have, as it were, a stairway leading us upward to the wondrous truth that the God-bestowed gift of Life stands unshaken and unimpaired even amid the destructive blows of what men call Death.

Think also of that other word, "Our friend Lazarus sleepeth," "is fallen asleep" (new version). How like to Death is Sleep,—the poets speak of them as twins,—and yet how unlike! In both we lay aside the working dress: but sleep needs no shroud. In sleep the body is quiet, but the spirit is none the lest alert. It is in dreams in the dim night-watches that prophets have been lifted up towards heaven; in dreams that we of earth have seen the loveliest visions, and heard the divinest music.

Unlike Death, Sleep has no dishonor, no

ugliness; nothing that affrights, nothing that corrupts. Sleep hath in its very nature the anticipation of awakening, refreshed and strengthened for new exertion. Infants smile, they seldom weep in their slumbers. The innocent, healthful child greets the dawn with a smile.

And here, again, after the spiritual lesson has been taught, although not before, there come to us numerous confirmations from the daily life. It is not merely that men survive the sleep and the swoon; but the mental alacrity of the life in sleep, the spiritual elevation of its dreams, and the fantastic work of its imaginations suggest that it is life, as real as our more prosaic waking hours. Sleep is rest. Who is not weary sometimes? Not averse to his work nor discontented with it, but needing to be recuperated for right endeavors. But we would not slumber on forever.

And here comes in the rest of it: "I go that I may awake him out of sleep."

Men love not an awakening, rude and abrupt, by the hand or voice of strangers. When the fever has left us and we have slum-

bered long enough, we would crave a gentle pressure on the brow, a kind whisper in the ear.

How pleasant is the union of the thought: to die is to sleep in Jesus, with the assurance that when I have rested long enough to prepare me for the duties of the unending day, Jesus Himself will come to awaken me.

But, after all, there is one word here, which may suffice of itself to resolve the enigma. Our *Friend* Lazarus sleepeth. Abraham's most honored title was God's Friend. And Lazarus was the Friend of Jesus. To all of us baptized ones saith this same Jesus, "Henceforth I call you not servants but friends. . . . Ye are my friends if ye do whatsoever I have commanded you."

Friendship may demand sacrifices, but it can never consent to a friend's destruction. Friendship may share its cup of bitterness with such as are dearly beloved, and give them part in its own baptism of pain; but it will not leave that soul in hell, nor give it over to corruption. The Jesus who Himself sorrowed and died may in very friendship to us stand

aloof when we sicken, and be seemingly absent from our death-bed. But, because He is our friend, He will share with us the pleasant rest, the glorious uprising.

But dare we claim this title? In this world of indifference and hostility, is our heart for Him a Bethany of rest, where we are glad to greet Him, and to prefer Him to the place of honor? Are we, like the sisters, now meekly listening, and now busy with His service? Do we mourn His absence, and live in hope of His return? Can our friendship endure the utmost test of trust in Him? For you remember the "Believest thou this?" and the answer of faith, while yet the tomb was still unclosed.

Yes. All is summed up in that one word, *Trust*. Are we prepared to intrust to Him, youth, age, sickness, life, death, and all things pertaining to them? To trust Jesus is to be Jesus' friend. To be Jesus' friend is to be assured that there is no slumber so deep but that He shall awaken us, no sepulchre so profound but that His commanding voice can reach us and arouse us there.

# IV.

# THE MYSTERY OF RESURRECTION.

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"*I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die.*"—S. JOHN, xi. 25, 26.

HOW familiar are these words! How often, when we have borne our dead towards the altar of God, has the Priest of God come to meet us at the portal with this abrupt beginning, this tremendous utterance, this defiant challenge to the King of terrors!

The Christian soul is reminded of the time when Jesus said, "Father, glorify Thy name. Then came there a voice from heaven, saying, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again." That word of Resurrection, like this word of Glory, comes to the Christian ear as an articulate voice from the highest heaven. Nor is its majesty altogether lost to the less

thoughtful multitude. The people and by-standers hear it, as if it thundered; and others in their thought liken it to the voice of an angel.

If it be lawful to discriminate in the utterances of the Master, this is among the most awful of them. "I am the resurrection, and the life," says Jesus, as weeping, groaning in spirit, He pursues His way to the tomb of Lazarus and beyond it, to His own. It is the bush burned with fire, while yet the bush is not consumed. Surely the place whereon we stand is holy ground.

This is the most magnificent self-assertion the world has ever known. Others have either modestly or impudently, honestly or falsely, proffered themselves as healers and restorers. Who ever before hath dared to claim, that he was the resurrection itself, and the life itself; the embodiment of them, the source whence they issue and to which they return, so that not merely of him and from him, but in him is life, and that life in him is the light of men?

"Come unto me," He says, "for I am meek and lowly in heart." And yet presently this

meek and lowly One shall say that which none other did ever dare to arrogate, " I am life and resurrection."

How does the mystery of the Incarnation meet us at every turn, and furnish us the key to unlock all mysteries! Who but the God-man could unite in perfect accord characters seemingly so discordant; now winning love by His humility, now inspiring confidence by His sublime confidence in His own inherent life. It is of interest to note how these words came to be spoken; and how Martha, beautifully docile in her hour of trouble, was led upward, step by step, to a clearer atmosphere of faith.

" Lord, if Thou hadst been here, my brother had not died." It was something to believe that much; that Jesus, had He been present, could have prevented this disaster.

But it would seem that Martha herself was dissatisfied with the words as they fell from her lips. Scarce knowing what she meant or what blessing she hoped for, she adds, " But I know, that, even now, whatsoever Thou wilt ask of God, God will give it Thee." Late as it was, and however opportunity had been lost by

delay, even now something might be won by prayer.

But Jesus sees not fit to betake Himself to prayer. He answers as one who holds as of right, and in His own hand, the keys of death and hell. "Thy brother shall rise again." Martha accepts the proffered comfort, but thrusts it away into the distant future. "I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day."

The story reminds us of the Dying Thief. "Lord, remember me,"—not here and now: that were too much for me to ask, or for Thee to give in Thine hour of weakness. "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom." But what need to wait? There on the cross is heard the same voice of majestic self-assertion: "Verily, I say unto thee, TO-DAY shalt thou be with me in paradise."

So here, Martha's faith, however aimed aright, fell short of the mark, when it deemed life and resurrection to be confined to the latter days. Jesus saith unto her, "I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live:

and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die." It needeth not to defer life and resurrection until the judgment day. The Lord of the judgment is already here in our midst, in the plenitude of life, imparting here, and now, the resurrection gift.

But I must not forget that I have proposed to myself a definite theme, viz.: the mystery of Resurrection and the light cast upon it in this story of the raising of Lazarus.

Let us then consider

## I. THE MYSTERY WHICH SURROUNDS THE DOCTRINE OF RESURRECTION.

We have been led heretofore to consider the dreadful mystery of death. Seemingly it converts the most magnificent of creatures into a handful of ashes; seemingly it brings the life of thought to an abrupt termination; seemingly it arrests finally the play of affections which elevate and adorn the race. Then comes the Lord of life. He stands in front of the charnel-house, and calmly assures us, "Thy brother shall rise again."

Presently this doctrine is amplified and

drawn out into various particulars. Death is the severance of body and soul. For a season the separation continues; the disembodied spirit is with kindred spirits in an abode called Paradise, where it rests from labors and is recuperated for the life that is to be. And then cometh the great day of Resurrection. Soul and body shall be re-united, and the man that died shall be a living man again, complete in all that is essential to his personal identity. In other words, the body, the thought, the affections, survive the catastrophe of death. The man who died shall rise to a conscious life. The man restored, immortal, shall know himself to be the same man who once lived a lower life, who once sickened and died.

We are warned not to interpret these sayings according to our limited experience. They transcend all experience. The risen body is identical with the buried body, but not in such sense as to mean that physical infirmities and deformities are perpetuated. That body buried was a natural body, dishonored and corrupt; this body risen is spiritual, powerful, glorious. I know not how many of the

old atoms remain: it is enough to be assured that nothing which necessarily belongs to our personal identity is lost. The heavenly life is a prolongation of our earthly life, replete with thought and with affection. Those who are counted worthy to attain the resurrection of the just neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God. Yet are they the same persons who once married and were given in marriage. Great is the change, or, rather, great is the promotion. Some likeness of it may be seen in the growth of the feeble, unknowing infant, into the warrior, the poet, the statesman.

To give reality to our apprehension, the resurrection has been exemplified in the person of the Lord Jesus. He is portrayed to us, lying cold and senseless in the tomb of rock, with members rent and a gaping wound in His side, embalmed and enshrouded after the manner of His nation. Presently He is presented to us alive after His Passion. It is the Jesus that died. In person He is recognizable by those who knew Him before. Thought is active, affections have survived; for He teaches,

comforts, feeds the hungry, exhibits the same partial friendship as before. It is the same Jesus, yet how different! He is, in advance of the Ascension, glorified already. The old familiarity is no longer permissible. The scars which tell of love upon the cross remain, but the wounds no longer bleed. It is the man Jesus, but glorious and majestic as an angel of light.

Here, then, is the visible pattern of the race redeemed. "If we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him." When we shall reach the close of the approaching Holy-week, let us realize that, in following out the history of Jesus, we are also reading our own. Let each say to his own heart, I am a follower of Christ, walking close behind Him. This life ended, there shall come to me another life, not violently dislocated from the present; a life in which the thoughts and affections of this one shall be prolonged, only purified and sublimed; a life in which I shall recognize mine own self, only my better self, the golden part of my humanity, extricated from all its dross.

This Resurrection doctrine is mysterious, not in that it affirms the life of the soul after death, but a risen life of the complex man. Many have dreamed that the spirit in man might prove to be immortal: but none, untaught by the spirit of Christ, ever dreamed that the whole man is to survive death; none, self-taught in religion, had ever presumed to say, "My flesh also shall rest in hope."

This revelation touches most nearly the life that we are now living. In affirming the excellence of the spiritual element, the "religion of the heart," as we call it, we may depreciate the religion of the body, the excellence of temperance in eating and drinking, of purity and chastity, of abstinence and the control of appetite. Alas! it is under pretext of a purer spirituality that men have learned to be negligent of acts of mercy and deeds of benevolence; that they even forsake the assembling of themselves for worship, and discard the holy sacraments provided to cleanse and sustain the spirits that dwell in clay.

Oh, it is only when we realize how far-reaching is the mercy of God, and that His

redemption is of the whole living and breathing man, in the integrity and entirety of his being, that we learn to present ourselves, body and soul, to God, a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable.

And so we are ready to inquire:

## 2. WHAT LIGHT IS THROWN UPON THE MYSTERY OF RESURRECTION.

The text we are considering guides us at once to the great thought:

(*a*) That Life and Resurrection come to us through the Person of our Incarnate Lord.

Consider that this evil of death is too great to be merely palliated. It has come down to us by inheritance, it is accelerated by contact with our kind, it is promoted by the impure air we breathe and the darkness in which we grope. No partial remedies will avail; no mere reconstruction will suffice. The whole man, body, heart, soul, is sick and dying. If relief is to come at all, it must be applied at the very spring of our being.

One there was, as full of life as we are filled with the seeds of death, Himself the Life and

the Son of the Living God. This fulness of life He brought down into our lower world, and allowed its influence to penetrate its pestilential atmosphere. But chiefly He took our diseased, dying humanity into union with His own infinite life. In this world-graveyard, there is a new creation. The Church grows up and reaches above the skies. Its Head is the Lord of Life, and we are made His members, grafted into Him, knit together in His body, compacted together with Him and with each other by joints and bands, so that the exuberance of the life that is in Him circulates throughout the channels of our being, and neutralizes death.

The vital bond is Faith, *i.e.* trust in Him who is the Resurrection and the Life. Hence, once incorporated in Him, Death has lost his power to destroy us. "He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die."

In endeavoring to wrestle with this vast thought, that I might tell you some little about it, I realize how difficult it is for our narrow,

earthly minds to entertain it. Is it possible for us to find an illustration, even a partial one, which may assist our conception?

Death comes sometimes to us through a person. The consumptive mother is warned not to sleep with her babe in her embrace, or to nurse it at her breast. Or else, you know how in modern, no less than in ancient days, the leper so certainly communicates his plague to any in familiar contact with him, that he is inexorably sequestered from the society of his fellows.

We know, too, how moral decay and death come to us from a person. The schoolmaster tells us that one deceitful, vicious scholar will, in spite of all his vigilance and teachings, poison the young minds around him.

One bold, bad man in a community will vitiate its moral tone.

Now, I know not that we can say of any person, in the physical sense, that health emanates from him, as does disease from a leper.

But, in the moral sense, some people are healthful to us. A loving little child in the

house seems to impart somewhat of his innocence to its atmosphere. When we have lived and worked with a man of determined will, of noble self-sacrifice, our feebler will seems to be toned up, our selfishness abashed.

Behold, then, the Incarnate Life standing in a world of death. Barely to behold, to admire, to reverence, is salutary. The presence of this Living One has carried salubrity afar, even to those who reject Him, who calumniate Him, who resist Him. So subtle and all-pervading is this breath of Life, that atheism itself is mitigated. And now one pushes modestly yet humbly through the crowd; one who, not content to admire, would cling to Him as well. Himself too holy for a sinful touch, she grasps the garment only of Him who is the Resurrection and the Life.

Never has the contagion of the leper more swiftly cast its deadly germ into the veins of one who carelessly grasped his hand, than does the virtue of life leap as lightning from the person of the Living One, responsive to the touch of Faith. She felt in herself that disease had vanished at the influx of that tide of life.

Oh, most blessed of mortals, who hast believed that there is Life to be found as well as Death, and that the Life so inheres in the person of our Lord, that to touch Him is to live. To such an one shall it ever be spoken, "Daughter, go in peace; thy sins be forgiven thee." Where sin is forgiven, there is no more death.

Thus does illumination come to us touching the resurrection, when, unmindful of its methods, we fasten our eyes on Him who embodies it in His own person; who calmly says of the human life, as you or I might say of a garment changed at pleasure, "I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again."

What if objection be made concerning the change of the matter of the body, and the dispersion of its elements? What if we cannot explain wherein the identity of a person resides? What if one asks, How shall the dead be raised, and with what body shall they come?

We answer, ours is a hidden, mysterious life, hid in Christ with God. I am in Him, who is Life itself and Resurrection itself. If I were dying, the touch of His garment should restore

me; if I were dead, a breath of His shall revive me.

The mystery of Resurrection is still further cleared, when we remember

(*b*) That Resurrection is a thing of the present as well as of the future.

Thy brother shall rise again! Yes, I know it: in the Resurrection at the last day, but not now, not now. Then comes the sublime assurance of our text, that now is the accepted time, to-day is the day of salvation. Life is already bestowed. Resurrection is all about us, howbeit their utmost triumphs are in reserve.

For whether is easier to say, "Thy sins are forgiven thee," or to say to the palsied one, "Arise and walk"?

Not only have there been actual resurrections of individuals, as of Jairus' daughter, the young man at Nain, Lazarus and our Lord Himself; but the world has seen a new life infused into society, and souls dead in trespasses and sins have been awakened to newness of life. The Resurrection of the Last Day is the outcome and culmination of the Life-working now in progress.

I may not enlarge upon the substantial proofs in history of this fact. Among the virtues, humility and the forgiveness of injuries seem not to have been invented until Christ came. Among the vices, the most shameless and defiant of them have been banished into the dark. Say what you will of the Christian body, with all its defects and divisions, everywhere we see working in it a principle of life unknown before; life that reaches after conformity to a Divine image; life that seeks to redeem the fallen; life that purifies the home, and fights against moral corruption.

Is Lazarus alone as a witness to the Resurrection power of Christ? The more marvellous instance of that power is the man once dead to all goodness, dead, buried, corrupt, with the stone of evil habit barring all egress from the tomb; but, by the penetrative call of the Master, restored to spiritual life, exemplifying in his risen life the spirit of his Lord.

Nor do we lack confirmation of this truth from our personal history. What is it but our uncertain clutch upon the garment of the Lord of Life, and the virtue, undeserved indeed, that

has gone out from Him into our fallen nature, that has recovered us when we were sick even unto death, that has saved us when we were ready to perish!

These things lead our faith onwards and upwards to the time when the last enemy shall be utterly destroyed, when we shall drink to the full of the pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb.

The excellence of Lent consists no little in this, that its associations are such as to carry us more nearly, more directly to the person of our Lord. Church services, holy sacraments, the blessed word, have all a life in them ; but a life imparted, not original. He only is Life itself.

To think about Him, to read about Him, to discuss the doctrines He has revealed, to use the means He has appointed, are all right things. But if we would know Him and the power of His Resurrection, we must know and approach Him and cling to Him as embodying in Himself all Life. Of His fulness must we seek to receive, and grace for grace. The Life

Eternal is a gift in time as well as in eternity. Bold and outspoken is the profession of our Faith: "I look for the Resurrection of the Dead, and the Life of the world to come."

I look for them, for they have already visited us, embodied in the Person of the Christ. When He shall return to earth, He will come as of old, in the plenitude of them.

I look for them in the coming world, because I see the antepast of them in the world that now is. In mine own time, yes, in mine own self, I have beheld a decay that is worse than that which men call death. I have seen the stone of inveterate custom rolled away. I have seen the man dead in sin, stirring in his shroud at a Divine summons, and the long-buried one presently sitting at his Master's table.

By these tokens I know and believe assuredly that "the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of man, and they that hear shall live."

# V.

# THE MYSTERY OF MAN'S SHARE IN GOD'S WORKS OF MERCY.

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*"Jesus said, Take ye away the stone."*

*"Jesus saith unto them, Loose him, and let him go."*—S. JOHN, xi. 39, 44.

THE subject of our present meditation is suggested and illustrated by these features of the Lazarus-story, viz.: that He Who raised the dead, invited and accepted at human hands the lesser offices of love, the unsealing of the tomb, the loosening of the grave-clothes.

Surely, as you have recurred again and again to the history which has now engaged our attention, the sense of its loveliness and of its sublimity has grown upon you. Have you thought wherein consists the charm? Is it not because in this narrative, characterized by a detail not used elsewhere save in the history of the Passion only, S. John sets before us a

living, breathing figure of One Who is at once Human and Divine? Is it not the marvellous reconciliation of our own familiar humanity, in its truest sympathies and most genuine affections, with the ineffable majesty of God's heir and equal, which invests this narrative with inexpressible sublimity and unequalled pathos?

Yes, God is here, in the person of His Christ, as Awful and as Glorious as when He spoke in thunders from the smoking summit of Sinai. And a pure humanity is also here, uttering human voices and shedding human tears. And these are not contrary the one to the other. The two natures are blended in the One Christ. His Divinity does not mar his humanness; neither is there anything in the human acts and words and tears, to diminish our reverence for the Godhead that dwelt in Him.

God is so great that He can stoop to condescension. But in the midst of that condescension, He shows Himself a King, and gives to His subjects their several tasks.

He who could do the greater work, needed

no help in the mere accessories of His miracles. One might say that the effect of the miracle would have been enhanced, if, when all stood in order around the sepulchre, at a silent gesture of the Master, the stone—like the iron gate in the Book of Acts—had moved aside as of its own accord; or if presently, while men closed their eyes before a flash of glory, Lazarus had been seen with the cerements of the grave mysteriously exchanged for the gracious habiliments of the living.

These are prosaic things, one might say,—men uniting their strength to heave a rock; busy fingers undoing knots and bands. But they are human incidents in a divine story; and our Lord, who was too great to perform unnecessary or pretentious miracles, left these offices to others. Jesus said, "Take ye away the stone. . . . Loose him, and let him go."

The mystery of God's call on man to lend assistance in the work of the Divine Mercy, is often suggested to us. "The silver is mine and the gold is mine." How rich is God! And yet His treasury stands ever open in our

midst, inviting the rich man's tithes, the widow's mite, pleading with the little child for a share of his slender purse. No small part of our religious energies are expended in collecting material supplies for the maintenance and extension of His Kingdom, who has but to open His hand and His Church is filled with plenteousness. The sense of mystery goes on even to querulousness. Why should I be so taxed and restrained, always refusing myself something, to promote the designs of One whose wealth is as illimitable as the universe?

Or else, it occurs to us, God is in might irresistible, and the hearts of men are in His hand. How easy for Him to make each day a Pentecost, with rushing mighty wind instead of earthly voices, and cloven tongues of fire instead of the foolishness of preaching! How easy for Him by a word to make the dry bones live!

And yet man's labor is a factor in the world's regeneration. He must prophesy to the bones, and cry out to the four winds ere the breath of the Spirit comes. There is a neighborhood or a family entombed in indifference, ignorance

or even vice. Their throat, says David, is an open sepulchre; their very talk reeks with the corruption of the charnel-house in which they lie. But it is only when some Christian soul puts forth all the energies of sagacity, enterprise and love, rolling away the stone, that light and life penetrate into that darkened quarter. The life of our contemporaries, Charles Lowder and his friends, for instance, are signal illustrations. In the slums of London, the home of crime and all abomination, where the stranger ventured at the peril of his life, they saw room for goodly churches, crowded with those same people, only clothed and in their right mind. Strange, we say, that Jesus should stand outside and wait for those few devoted men and women to roll away the stone!

There is another department of this mystery against which the spirit of the age earnestly protests, and which some Christian men vehemently deny. It is that man has any part in loosening the bands of the dead-revived. For absolution means precisely and exactly loosing, and men do say that there is

no such loosing by any human instrumentality.

There is no question that none can forgive sins but God only ; but none the less is pardon ministered to the individual by the instrumentality of mortal men. This word, " Loose him, and let him go," spoken for the extrication of Lazarus from the dishonors of the grave, has its world-wide counterpart in the original commission to the Church, " Whosesoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them." If pardon has its being in the Eternal Mind of God, the utterance of the pardon is in time. When God quickens a dead soul to life, He delivers it to His Church, that in stripping it of the dismal habiliments which fettered its limbs, and casting over it the robe of the living, God's merciful deed may be authenticated and published to the world, and the dead man be enfranchised and sent forth to dwell in his own proper home, and to sit at table with his Lord.

I need not here protest, that it is not the loosing of grave-clothes, that can make a dead man live ; it is not the uncovering of the face

bound with a napkin, that can restore sight and speech to a corpse. Yet it is in consonance with the reverence we owe to Him Who alone quickeneth the dead, to hold in high honor the absolving ordinances of the Church, the power to bind and to loose, conceded to it by its Head, to be exercised under His instructions. Thus is Baptism the sentence of liberty to tread God's courts, and the Holy Communion is the release from fetters which threatened to bind us anew. And, as for the righteous censures of God's representatives and stewards over His family, little as we may reck of them, lightly as we may speak of being "turned out of the Church," they are, when presumptuous sins authorize and demand their infliction, verily and indeed the acceptance of the Spiritual Shroud, the remand from the sunshine of life, back into the cavern of a spiritual death.

So, then, Bethany presents to us a picture in miniature of the time in which we live. We see about us the mourners whose eyes have failed in looking for a comforter, the sick whose recovery seems hopeless, the dead waiting to be revived. In the midst of ignorance and

vice, of sorrow and despair, there stands the Infinite Life, the Infinite Compassion.

And that Life and that Compassion sets to itself limits and restraints. It demands a human agency. It waits for man to do his part. And it is only when the servants of God are ready and alert, lending all their energies to prepare the way of the Lord, that the Light floods the chambers of darkness, and the Life arouses from the sleep of death.

It is a reflection that touches the clergy very nearly, and brings at times a horrible dread upon us. Nor us alone; for each Christian soul may well question with itself: Is there no fast-sealed sepulchre to-day whence my weak hands might have removed the covering; is there no fettered spirit whose bonds might not have yielded, if I had made it my loving care to undo them?

You will not expect me to explain this marvel. The mystery of Redemption is as unfathomable as the mystery of the evil which it relieves. Thus much is in our power: accepting the mystery as a fact, we may discern bright spots in the cloud that envelops God's

pathway, glimpses of wisdom, purpose, goodness, in this divine ordering. And some of these are suggested in the incidents of Lazarus' revival, to which we now recur.

Consider, then,

I. THAT IN THESE COMMANDS OUR LORD AFFORDED AN OUTLET TO COMPASSION.

God be thanked that human nature is not altogether selfish. We read that "many of the Jews came to Martha and Mary, to comfort them concerning their brother." We read that when these "saw Mary, that she rose up hastily and went out, followed her, saying, She goeth unto the grave to weep there." Here are evidences of compassionate sympathy. It found perhaps little to say, and nothing that it could do. They could at least sit down beside the lonely ones, and add a tear to the many which these dropped upon the grave.

Our Lord recognizes the worth of this pity, and makes room for it in the miracle. It is not hard to imagine with what alacrity these kind souls responded to the summons, and how many willing hands grasped the heavy block,

and then with what loving haste they sought to put out of sight all that might remind Lazarus and themselves of the appointments of the grave. Surely there is a subtle charm in the incident, viewed as an evidence of our Lord's appreciation of Lazarus' friends and neighbors. If in old age one of these were telling the story to his children, with what pleasure would he add, "When all was ready, the Lord looked toward me, and summoned me to lend to His Almightiness the strength of my human arm."

Who among us knows not something of the pain which attends an impotent compassion, and the relief afforded when pity finds at last a work that may be done? How beautiful is it to see, in some of the extremities of life, kinsmen, neighbors, strangers, vieing one with another for the privilege of offering some minor ministry of kindness.

It may be that we have fortitude enough to endure our individual sorrows. But a truly generous soul is keenly affected by the ills which afflict the bodies and the souls of other men. Suppose there were nothing permitted

to us save only to stand and look! That God were not open to entreaty! That we had need to accept evil as inevitable! That we had no strength to remove an obstacle in the way of mercy, no skill to untie the knots and tangles of life! How cold and sorrowful this world would be!

Beyond all doubt this life of ours is ordered for the culture and discipline of the affections. Without sorrow there would be no room for pity. God accepts us as His helpers, that in helping Him after our poor fashion, we may become more merciful, more self-forgetful.

There is a technical phrase much used in things political, and ecclesiastical as well, *Non possumus*, i.e. we can do nothing. The words are readily uttered, and afford an easy way to shake off painful responsibilities. Let us beware how we utter them too hastily. For it has often happened that some one has laid down at your door a great trouble. Your first instinct has been to say, Why at my door rather than another's? What right has any to single me out as the depository of his trouble, and to invade the quiet of my life with matters

in which I have no special concern? How impossible for me to find the remedy, to solve the difficulty, to undo the careless mischief!

But presently better thoughts supplant these selfish ones. We take the time to pity, and pity begets in us a yearning to relieve, and this heart-yearning strangely clears the sight and discloses possibilities unseen before. How often has pity led on to Faith, and Faith removed obstacles, in appearance as deeply rooted as the everlasting hills! Without attempting, then, to suggest the ultimate solution of this mystery, I claim that the Divine Mercy accepting human offices and waiting for them is for you and for me a wise and merciful arrangement. It helps us to get outside of our narrowness; it softens our hearts; it purifies our affections. Let none say, God can work His will without me. There was once so humble a creature as a dumb ass tied at his master's door, and there came a message, "The Lord hath need of him," and his owner freely surrendered him. The Palm-Sunday story would be marred without this accessory in the progress of the meek and lowly One.

Surely He Who had use for the unknowing beast of burden, can find a worthy place in the procession of His majestic works for those of us, who, however our arms are weak, have cultivated the ready mind and the heart of pity.

There is another reflection very near akin to this. We observe

2. GOD SHARES WITH MAN HIS WORK OF MERCY, IN ORDER TO HONOR HUMANITY, AND TO TESTIFY HIS APPRECIATION OF ITS DIGNITY.

"What is man, that Thou art mindful of him!" is the theme of many a sacred lyric. God has made him only a little lower than the angels, and crowned him with glory and honor. And then in the fulness of time God has taken this humanity of ours into union with Himself, and made us partakers of the Divine nature. As we look down the long vista of the glory-world, we see at the end, man redeemed, glorified, enthroned.

It is no marvel, then, that, while Christ's Kingdom is progressing towards its utmost

realization, God should testify the honor in which He holds His creature, that He should share with him the most sacred offices, and find a place in the work of redemption for the vigor of his intellect, the wealth of his affections and the labor of his hands.

Thus was Mary honored as mother and nurse of the Eternal Son. Thus Apostles shared His journeys and His vigils, and distributed to the multitude the bread which He blessed and brake. And thus is the Church ordained, a family with a task for every member, an army with a post for every sentinel.

The word "work" was often on the lips of our Lord. "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." "I must work the works of Him that sent me while it is day." And at the last, "I have finished the work which Thou gavest me to do."

What so honorable, what so salutary, as work with God and for God! What is there, like work, to impart reality and stability to our religion!

Thus, then, while the Lord is in no wise dependent on us; while more than twelve

legions of angels stand ever ready to put the sickle into His harvest, yet doth He summon us from the market: Son—daughter—go work to-day in my vineyard.

The alleviation of human misery, and the evangelization of the world, are works to be effected by human industry. So large and so varied is the field, that there is room therein for all human endeavor. The thinker and the student remove many an obstacle. The teacher, the financier, the traveller, woman with her domestic and housewifely gifts, all may consecrate their talents to setting forward the work of the Infinite Mercy.

Let this reflection, then, encourage and animate us, when we look upon this mystery of evil awaiting to be relieved; of God, as it were, standing still until men betake themselves to action.

God is not content that each one of us should barely save himself. There is a noble aspiration open to us all,—to save some other soul from death. In work for God we are to find our true ennobling, and to secure the utmost reward.

These considerations lead us to some serious reflections well suited to the Lenten time.

God invites our aid, and is waiting for it. How this thought humbles while it dignifies us! The Infinite One asks something of us, intrusts to us the success of a work inaugurated by the surrender of His own Son.

Is it so that we can really do something for God, can please God by our readiness and industry? Oh, then, how great is the shame of reluctant, grudging, faint-hearted service! What disgrace, that, when He calls for volunteers, we should ever hang back and ask, Why look to me rather than another? How serious a matter is it to refuse God anything that He asks, or to excuse ourselves from any task which He assigns! What need have we to seek after a truer measure of self-consecration, the fulness of a love which keeps nothing back!

And yet more, it is a pitiful reflection that the world, groaning and travailing in pain even until now, is in some sense dependent upon us for its redemption. It adds to our distress in view of the imperfections and divisions of the Church to know that, by reason of them, her

hearing is made dull, her arm is weakened, her fingers have lost their nimbleness.

But, when we come nearer home, how much cause have we for self-reproach! If we were united in the endeavor to lead really saintly lives, how many, now indifferent, would have recognized the beauty of such lives, and been tempted to venture in that path!

If our homes had been indeed Christian homes, fragrant with thoughts and devotions, how might our children have grown up other than they are!

If in society and in business, we had always borne ourselves as the disciples of the meek and lowly One, always just, always kind, always ready to forgive, how excellent might have been our influence! But it is greatly to be feared that one or another has lain still in his prison, because it never occurred to us that it was our business to take measures for his release; or else still wears the grave-clothes of evil habit, because we never sought to help him to disrobe and to put on the vesture of the new man.

Well may we invoke, in the Litany, for-

giveness for our sins, negligences and ignorances.

Yes, God has stood ready to revive; and there have lain around us the dead, capable of revival. But, in our negligence, we have actually obstructed the Lord's work, and delayed or defeated the arousing of the slumberer.

Vain is it to object that the success of God's work ought not to be endangered or marred by man's negligence. The mystery remains. Nay, we see a depth of wisdom and love in this unequal partnership between God and His creature, encouraging us to believe that when we come to know all, we shall exclaim with profounder reverence, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!"

It seems very plain that none of us can rise towards heaven without carrying others thitherward. None can fall into the abyss without dragging another the self-same way.

Oh, let us see to it well, that none lingers in prison by reason of a door that we might unclose; that none is encumbered with the grave-garb, whose fetters our fingers might unloose!

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The mysteries of providence and of grace as illustrated in the story of Lazarus

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